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Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the seventy-third session

Observer status for the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in the General Assembly

Letter dated 23 August 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion of an item entitled "Observer status for the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in the General Assembly" in the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

Established in Ulaanbaatar in July 2009 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, Sukhbaatar Batbold, the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to providing sustainable solutions to landlocked developing countries for their special needs and challenges for future development. Over the past years, the International Think Tank has grown steadily in both membership and international influence. As of June 2018, it had 12 member States from Asia, Africa, Europe and South America.

Since its founding, the International Think Tank has been working to raise awareness of and to promote the uniqueness and obstacles faced by landlocked developing countries through high-quality research and high-level workshops and seminars.

So far, the International Think Tank has achieved commendable progress, issued over 10 research papers and organized 30 international, regional and national workshops on issues related to landlocked developing countries. Since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the International Think Tank has also aligned its work priorities with the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda and produced initial results.

The International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, supported and mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/214, has been a staunch supporter of the United Nations and its activities. It upholds the purposes and



principles of the Charter of the United Nations and stands for the authority and irreplaceable role of the United Nations in international affairs. The International Think Tank is currently a close partner with the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the World Trade Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the Asian Development Bank and other regional and national research institutes and universities.

I believe that observer status in the General Assembly will help the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries to further align its work with the sustainable development endeavours of the United Nations and contribute to greater development partnerships to meet global challenges.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum (annex I) and a draft resolution (annex II) are attached herewith. The text of the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries and a list of countries that have ratified, approved, accepted or acceded to the Agreement are available from https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=X-19&chapter=10&lang=en.

I have the honour to request that the present letter and its annexes be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Sukhbold **Sukhee**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mongolia
to the United Nations

Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

1. Context

On 6 October 2017, the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, which had been endorsed at the meeting of foreign ministers of landlocked developing countries in 2010 and deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, entered into force and was ratified by 10 countries, namely, Mongolia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Armenia, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Paraguay, Burkina Faso, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Nepal.

The International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries is an intergovernmental organization headquartered in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and is mandated to conduct research and studies for the particular needs and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries. As of August 2018, membership had grown to 12 members, with the addition of Ethiopia (January 2018) and Bhutan (April 2018).

Landlocked developing countries have a long way to go to fully benefit from globalization and to achieve sustained and inclusive economic growth, sustainable development, poverty eradication, employment generation and structural transformation.

These goals are the priority of the International Think Tank; to achieve them, however, there is a pressing need for better integration of these issues into development strategies at the national, regional and global levels. Strengthened partnerships between landlocked developing countries, transit countries and development partners, within the context of North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as strengthened partnerships with the relevant international and regional organizations and between public and private sector actors, are essential.

To deal with the constraints facing landlocked developing countries, the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in August 2003. It adopted the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries, and the Almaty Declaration. In 2014, the Almaty Programme of Action was succeeded by the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, which was adopted as the outcome document of the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

The International Think Tank is following the lead set by the Vienna Programme of Action as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The activities of the International Think Tank, such as the sharing of experiences, information exchange, consultation, brokering, and common positioning on pro-poor trade policies and transport and transit-related development strategies for the landlocked developing countries, aim to contribute to the main goal of the Vienna Programme of Action, which is to address the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries arising from their landlockedness, remoteness and geographical constraints in a more coherent manner and thus contribute to an enhanced rate of sustainable and inclusive growth, which can contribute to the eradication of poverty by moving towards the goal of ending extreme poverty, as well as raising human development.

2. Brief history of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries

The idea of establishing a think tank for landlocked developing countries originated at the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in Almaty in 2003.

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/180 on specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries, the Conference addressed the transit-related, infrastructural and other problems facing landlocked developing countries. After the Conference, an inter-agency meeting endorsed the Almaty Programme of Action, which aimed to improve policies, enhance infrastructure, improve international access for goods from landlocked developing countries, generate additional technical assistance and monitor and follow up on measures taken.

The Almaty Programme of Action responded to the perceived need for more research and advocacy by mandating the launch of a think tank to study the issues surrounding trade in landlocked developing countries.

The idea of having a think tank for landlocked developing countries became an initiative when the President of Mongolia addressed a meeting of Heads of State of landlocked developing countries in Havana in 2006, stating that: "If we want to maximize the efficiency of our coordinated efforts, we should have an excellent analytical capacity. This, we believe, could be reached through establishing an international think tank in one of our capitals. Putting such a 'brain' in place, we could build optimal strategies on any matter of our interest and avoid duplication of our actions and endeavours."

A global event of landlocked developing countries and transit countries on trade and trade facilitation, held in Ulaanbaatar in 2007, conducted a midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. At the conference, landlocked developing countries agreed to consider setting up an international think tank which could be located in Ulaanbaatar. For this purpose, landlocked developing countries urged international organizations and donor countries to assist them in achieving this endeavour.

In 2007, the Landlocked Developing Countries' Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Trade Facilitation adopted the Ulaanbaatar Declaration, and in 2009, the General Assembly adopted its resolution 64/214, in which it welcomed the establishment of the international think tank in Ulaanbaatar to enhance the analytical capability of landlocked developing countries and to promote the exchange of experiences and best practices needed to maximize their coordinated efforts for the effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

In April 2009, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific adopted its resolution 65/6, entitled "Support for the establishment of an international think tank of landlocked developing countries". In the resolution, the Commission invited Governments, donor countries, relevant United Nations bodies and other agencies to support the establishment of the think tank in Ulaanbaatar; requested technical support from the Executive Secretary; and called upon the Executive Secretary to designate a focal point to provide support for the proposal.

In July 2009, the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries was officially launched in Ulaanbaatar by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, Sukhbaatar Batbold.

The Government of Mongolia, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Office of Legal Affairs supported the group of landlocked developing countries to elaborate the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries. The Agreement was endorsed at the meeting of foreign ministers of landlocked developing countries in 2010. The Agreement entered into force on 6 October 2017 following the accession of Nepal on 7 August 2017, which became the tenth member State of the International Think Tank. According to the Agreement, the Agreement shall enter into force on the sixtieth day after the date of deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

The second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries was held in Vienna, Austria, from 3 to 5 November 2014 and adopted the Vienna Declaration and Vienna Programme of Action for the next decade, which highlighted the importance of the International Think Tank and its role in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and encouraged all stakeholders to support and utilize the International Think Tank.

3. Activity of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries

Today, the International Think Tank is actively working for the special needs and challenges of the landlocked developing countries, producing high-quality research and organizing seminars and workshops in order to enhance analytical capability within landlocked developing countries and to promote the exchange of experiences and practices needed to maximize their coordinated efforts under South-South cooperation for the full and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The International Think Tank has done some substantive work and published around 10 publications that are important to all landlocked developing countries, including a handbook on multilateral trade negotiations; a study on bilateral transit and transportation agreements of landlocked developing countries; a report on implications for landlocked developing countries of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation; and research reports on connectivity issues in landlocked developing countries, exploring the potential of trade connectivity, transportation connectivity and information and communications technology development in landlocked developing countries.

On 11 and 12 June 2018, the International Think Tank held its inaugural meeting, with the support of the Government of Mongolia and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The meeting marked the historic inauguration of the International Think Tank and facilitated the sharing of information and experiences through interactive discussions among government officials of landlocked developing countries, donor countries and international experts during thematic sessions. It included a high-level opening session, a high-level press conference and thematic discussions of priority issues for landlocked developing countries and the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Over the years of its development, the International Think Tank has attracted worldwide attention. It is currently a close partner with the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the World Trade Organization, the

World Intellectual Property Organization, the Asian Development Bank and other international, regional and national research institutes and universities.

With the concerted efforts of its member States, the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries is evolving into a strong organization with world class capacity that is committed to coordinating voices and efforts on the special needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries from a growing global network of members and partners to better serve its mission. Permanent observer status in the General Assembly would help it to engage more efficiently on the international stage to facilitate the further strengthening of the capacities of landlocked developing countries and assist in the formulation of joint platforms and common positions for concerted actions, to encourage more countries to support landlocked developing countries, to help landlocked developing countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to contribute more to building sustainable solutions to the challenges of future development.

Annex II**Draft resolution****Observer status for the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in the General Assembly**

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries,

1. *Decides* to invite the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;
2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the action necessary to implement the present resolution.